

"THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE."—CHRIST.

The Christian Freeman.

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CHRISTMAS.

O, TIME by holy prophets long foretold,
Time waited for by saints in days of old,
O, sweet auspicious morn,
When Christ, the Lord, was born!

Again the fixed changes of the year,
Have brought that season to the world most
dear,
When angels all aflame,
Bringing good tidings, came.

Again we think of her—the meek, the mild,
The dove-eyed mother of the holy child,
The chosen and the best,
Among all women blest.

We think about the shepherds who, dismayed,
Fell on their faces, trembling and afraid,
Until they heard the cry—
Glory be to God on high.

And we remember those who from afar,
Followed the changing glory of the star
To where its light was shed,
Upon the sacred head;

And how each trembling awe-struck worshipper
Brought gifts of gold, and frankincense, and
myrrh,
And spread them on the ground,
In reverence profound.

We think what joy it would have been to share
In their high privilege who came to bear,
Sweet spice and costly gem,
To Christ, in Bethlehem.

And in that thought we half forget that He
Is wheresoe'er we seek Him earnestly;
Still filling every place
With sweet abounding grace.

And we remember how with him our homes
are blest,
And oft in weariness we've found the rest,
He said we all might share,
If we his spirit bear.

And though in garments of the flesh, as then,
No more He walks this sinful earth with men,
The poor, to Him most dear,
Are always with us here.

And He saith, "Inasmuch as ye shall take,
Good to these little ones for My dear sake,
In that same measure ye
Have brought it unto Me."

Therefore, O, men, in prosperous homes who
live,
Having all blessings earthly wealth can give,
Remember their sad doom
For whom there is no room—

No room in any home, in any bed,
No soft white pillow waiting for the head—
And spare from treasures great,
To help their low estate.

And into darkened dwellings come with cheer,
With pitying hand to wipe the falling tear,
Comfort for Christ's dear sake,
To childless mothers take.

Children whose lives are blest with love untold,
Whose gifts are greater than your arms can
hold,
Think of the child who stands
To-day with empty hands.

Go, fill them up, and you will also fill
Their empty hearts that be so cold and still,
And brighten longing eyes
With grateful glad surprise.

May all who have, at this blest season, seek
The precious little ones, the poor and meek,
In joyful sweet accord,
Thus lending to the Lord,

Yes, crucified Redeemer, who didst give
Thy toil, thy tears, thy life that we might live,
Thy spirit grant that we
May live one day for Thee.

O, TIME by holy prophets long foretold,
Time waited for by saints in days of old,
O, sweet auspicious morn,
When Christ, the Lord was born!

CHRISTMAS.

"WHAT are you thinking of, Alice? You will never get this room trimmed if you stop so long over every garland you make. Why, I have twined three hoops whilst you have been wreathing that cross?"

"I don't wonder you laugh at me, Cousin Lizzie; you are so quick and deft with those tiny fingers that all graceful and pretty things spring like magic from your touch. But the truth is I was speculating about our Christmas customs. We seem to have borrowed from Druid and Pagan, and there is but little left of the Christian element in our celebration of the day."

"No, Alice; not so. We have Christianised the Pagan, and baptised it into the Christian spirit. The Druids, gentle and peaceful as they were, retained one horrible feature in their sylvan worship. With them the holly, ivy, and mistletoe were sacred to their mystic rites. It was a superstition with them that the wood-spirits would flock to the branches of evergreens which decked their halls and homes, and thus escape unnnipped by frost till a milder season. Their worship is a thing of the past, but the custom of decorating our houses with the evergreens remains to us, not as a part of their superstition, but as an emblem of the higher and eternal life which Christ made known to the world. We do not see hiding under the green leaves or peeping out between the branches the face of wood nymph or elfin sprite; we feel only that the fadeless green is an emblem of immortality, and that joy and infinite love are typified by the living branches which fade not nor wither in the cold and bleak desolation of winter."

"I must confess I never thought of our decorations in this light. They have always seemed to me like the trimming upon a dress, merely for outside show, but you have invested them with a deeper meaning. Now can you tell me if Christmas was established immediately after Christ's death?"

"I believe its institution is attributed to Pope Telesiphorus, who died A.D. 138. At first it was a movable feast-day in the Church, but in the fourth century Cyril of Jerusalem was so anxious to have

the day of Christ's birth fixed by the best authority, that Pope Julius I. gave orders for a commission of inquiry, which resulted in an agreement upon the 25th December. It was generally believed that the Saviour was born at 12 o'clock at night, and therefore the Roman Catholics, from the sixth century, have ushered in the Christmas festivities by a midnight mass, another at early dawn, and a third in the morning; after that the day was given up to feasting and merriment, one distinguishing feature of which was the performance of 'miracle plays,' which delineated the scenes in the life of the Saviour. Longfellow, in his 'Golden Legend,' has reproduced for us one of these dramatic mysteries. There, Alice, I have given you an historical lesson. Don't you think I am very wise?"

"You seem to be so well posted up I should like a few more questions answered. Christmas is sometimes called Yule. Why is this?"

"The Yule Festival was of Pagan origin, and used to be observed among the Romans, Saxons, and Goths, in commemoration of the turning of the year. It finally became merged, as Christianity progressed, in our Christmas. In olden times, in England, on Christmas eve, an immense log called the 'Yule log' was put upon the fire; it was so big it was expected to burn till Candlemas day (Feb. 2). The custom of singing Christmas carols has come down to us from the early ages. It sprang from the shepherds' song at the birth of Christ. Many of the carols, particularly the Welsh, have been greatly celebrated; even to this day Calabrian minstrels descend from the mountains to Naples and Rome, chanting wild songs at every shrine of the Virgin Mother, under the poetical notion they should cheer her till the birth of her son."

"Now, Lizzie, what has the custom of giving presents on Christmas arisen from? I always thought it was in commemoration of God's great gift to us."

"I think, Alice, that, too, was founded on the old practice of New Year gifts, and then it is such a time of happiness and jubilee the feelings expressed themselves naturally in this sort of outpouring. There was a time when the exactions at Christmas became a burden; everybody was expected to give, not only to their own

servants, but to every one who served them in any way. Tradesmen levied black mail upon their customers in the form of Christmas boxes. In 1836 the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs sent a circular to the different embassies, requesting a discontinuance of the 'Christmas boxes,' and since then the practice has decreased. The pretty custom of the Christmas tree, which has become so prevalent now among us, has been adopted from the Germans. It makes a children's holiday, and a beautiful mode of distributing family gifts. And this reminds me, Alice, that I have yet to finish divers portfolios and cushions for our tree this evening. So, if you have extracted from me all I know, I will leave you to finish the adornings of the room while I complete my gifts."

O! one thing more, Lizzie. Why do we eat mince pies on Christmas?"

"The why I cannot tell you, unless it is to get the nightmare; but they have been famous since time immemorial. In Queen Elizabeth's time they were called 'minched pies,' and to this day in Scotland 'munched,' and they have always formed an important part of the Christmas refreshments. They were originally made in the shape of a crèche or cradle, to typify the manger at Bethlehem." — *Christian Register*.

IMMORTALITY.

FOR many years previous to 1845 it had been known that the planet Uranus was subject to certain perturbations in its orbit, which could not be accounted for by the attraction of the sun and of the other planetary bodies. From the nature and amount of these perturbations, Le Verrier, a French mathematician, demonstrated the existence of an undiscovered planet; and so completely did he determine its place in the distant heavens, that when Dr. Galle, of the Berlin Observatory, pointed his telescope to the place designated by Le Verrier, he not only found the new planet, but found it within one degree of its computed location!

Here, then, we have not only an unknown planet casting the spell of its attraction upon those that are known and seen, and producing thereby its visible effects, but to the eye of reason these mysterious effects became the infallible

proofs of the existence and direction of another world, hitherto undiscovered and unknown. So with the human soul and its continued love for the dead. We follow them to the shores of the final river, and they recede from our view. No more do we listen to the music of their friendly voices, and behold the light of their smiling countenances. They are hidden from us by the veil of death, as from creation's morning Neptune had lain hidden from all mortal vision in the depths of immensity.

The misty veil
Of mortality blinds the eye,
That we see not the hovering angel bands
On the shores of eternity.

But though distant and invisible, we feel the spell of their celestial attraction. Yielding thereto our hearts are the subjects of tender perturbations, and sighs and tears are the witnesses of the susceptibility of our nature to its distant and silent power.

Now we argue that the very existence of this continued love for the dead is in itself a proof of our continued and immortal existence. For if all souls perished at death we think the infinite and all merciful Creator would have so constituted us that the moment a parent or child or wife or husband was dead, all love for them would cease forever. Has the Creator so constituted the human soul that, despite itself, it remembers and still loves objects that have long ceased to exist? Has this palpable and tender effect no adequate cause? Comes this mysterious powerful attraction, that draws us so sweetly towards the unseen country, from the empty void of non-existence? To suppose this is to impeach the Creator of the human heart, and to charge him with trifling with our most tender and most holy affections.

While, then, we follow our friends to the river of death, and after they have crossed, wander sadly up and down its banks, still bound to them by the chords of a deathless love, every pang we feel when we realise that they are gone, every emotion of tenderness that thrills our hearts with its warm immortal glow, every tear that we shed, or sigh that we heave, each and all are but so many proofs in the soul herself that the dead, whose memory we so fondly cherish, still live immortal beyond the grave.

THE SEMINARY OF LAUSANNE.

By 1725 French Protestantism was supposed to be conquered; Louis XIV. had ten years before rejoiced on his death-bed at its destruction; order seemed re-established for ever amongst the rebellious race which had struggled in the Cevennes for liberty of conscience. But at that very time the famous Antoine Court visited the persecuted churches, held assemblies night and day of as many as 3000 hearers, baptised children, administered the Lord's Supper, and saw with tears of joy and gratitude that Protestantism was not dead, though its temples were destroyed and its pastors dispersed. What a delight was it to the Huguenots again to see and hear a minister of God! They flocked around him as he came from place to place, each desiring to speak to him or ask some spiritual counsel.

The harvest was plenteous, but labourers there were none. The colleges which educated pastors had long been abolished in France. Court appealed to those ministers who had sought refuge in Holland, but none of them would quit that peaceful retreat for a life of uncertainty—or rather, for an almost certain death. He then conceived the idea of himself founding a college. This could not be done in France. He thought of Switzerland, rejected Geneva as being too near the French frontier, and fixed on Lausanne. Aided by Archbishop Wake, of Canterbury, the distinguished Alphonse Turretin, and the Dutch, Swiss, and German churches, he opened his seminary at Lausanne in 1730, and appealed to all those who felt a *call to Martyrdom*. These steps were taken with the utmost secrecy lest the attention of the French Government should be excited. The churches appointed Court their deputy-general to protect their interests in Switzerland, and to travel in other Protestant States on behalf of the Seminary.

The Seminary continued to flourish, and seems to have had an average of from twenty to thirty students in the latter part of last century. The course embraced ethics, philosophy, and theology, and extended over three years. A monthly allowance of about 30s. was made to each student, and they were superintended by a committee of seven or eight persons, amongst whom were some of the principal men of Lausanne.

The source whence the necessary funds were derived was kept secret; one of the students who once dared to ask from whom his allowance came was answered, "What does it matter to you, so long as you get it regularly?"

The Seminary received considerable support from foreign countries. In 1787 the Jesuit Lenfant sought to obtain from Louis XVI. its destruction; he says it is "subsidised by two foreign powers," and "the veil of mystery which covers these relations between the ministers of a sect essentially anti-monarchical and republican governments testifies to some dark project, and should alone suffice to excite suspicion." It is, however, certain that no political services were ever required from the Seminary, or even hinted at by its foreign supporters, even in times of war. Without foreign aid the Seminary could not have existed, for the Protestants in France were impoverished by the heavy taxes levied upon them, and the property which the refugees had left had been confiscated. It is estimated to have produced about a hundred pastors between 1730 and 1809, in which year the Seminary was closed, at the time of the foundation by Napoleon of the college at Mondauban.

Such was for fourscore years the nursery of the bold pastors of the desert: a foreign land gave them education; their own martyrdom. K.

THE THREE WEEPERS.

BY H. BONAR.

SORROW weeps!

And drowns its bitterness in tears;
My child of sorrow,
Weep out the fulness of thy passionate grief
And drown in tears
The bitterness of lonely years,
God gives the rain and sunshine mild,
And both are best my child!

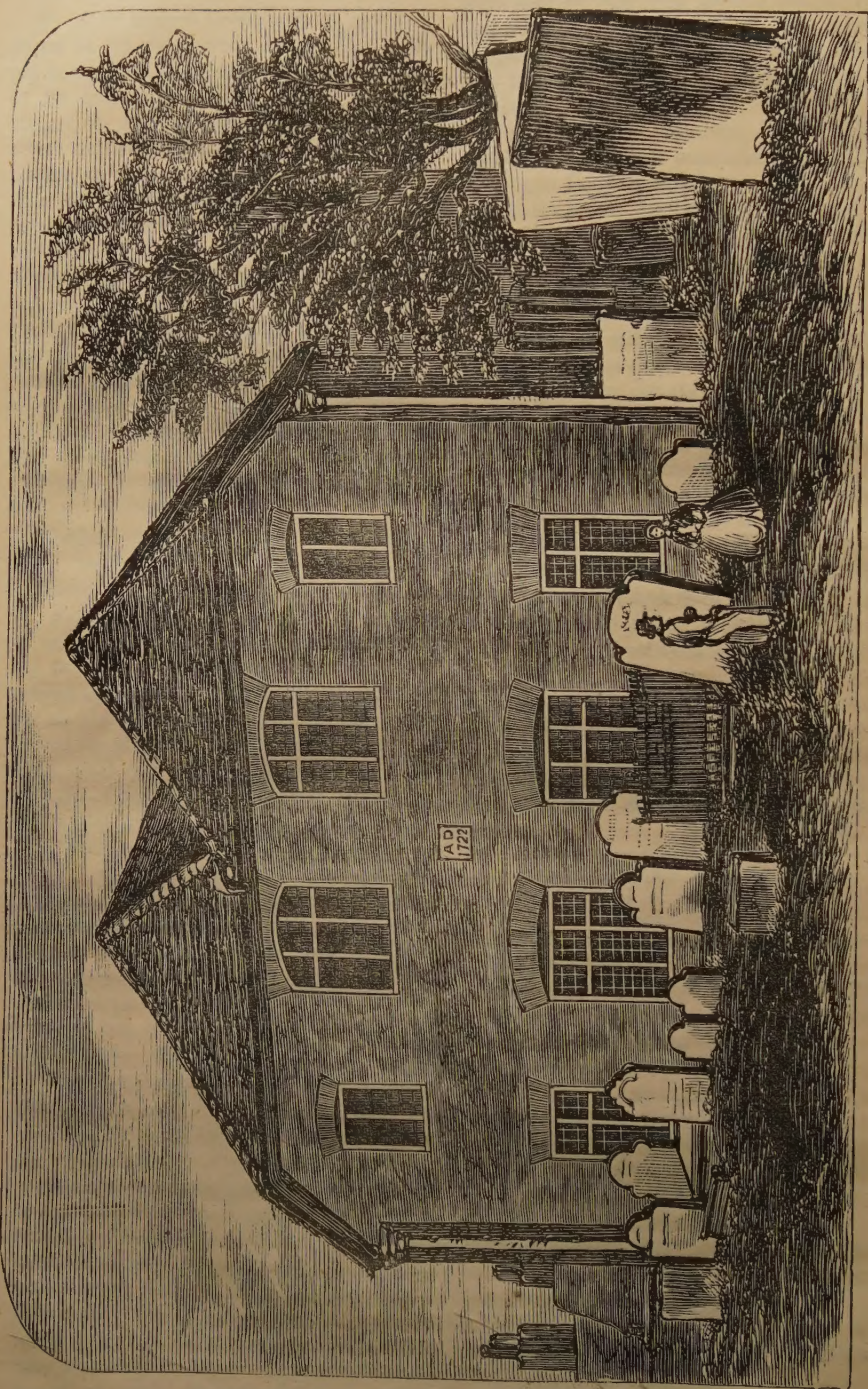
Joy weeps!

And overflows its banks with tears;
My child of joy,
Weep out the gladness of thy pent-up heart,
And let thy glistening eyes
Run over in their ecstasies;
Life needeth joy; but from on high
Descends what cannot die!

Love weeps!

And feeds its silent life with tears;
My child of love,
Pour out the riches of thy yearning heart,
And like the air of even,
Give and take back the dew of heaven;
And yet that longing heart of thine
Feeds upon love divine.





DR. DODDRIDGE'S CHAPEL.—THE "GREAT MEETING," HINCKLEY.

DR. DODDRIDGE'S CHAPEL.—THE
"GREAT MEETING," HINCKLEY.

THE first pastor of the Church assembling in the above place of worship was Henry Watts, of Sidney College, Cambridge, M.A., one of "the glorious Two Thousand." He was ejected from his living, the rectory of Sweepstone, in 1662, and retired to Weddington, where he lived for twenty years. From Weddington he removed to Barwell, and preached at Hinckley, about a mile and a half distant, on Sunday afternoons. Whether the congregation to which he preached at Hinckley was gathered together by himself, or was in existence before he came, is uncertain. It is clear, however, from the above that the congregation can be traced back to about the year 1680, and has therefore been in existence upwards of *one hundred and eighty years*. Mr. Watts died on February 2nd, 1699, in the 63rd year of his age, and was buried in Barwell Church. His successor was Mr. John Southwell, who died December 9th, 1705, and who was buried in Hinckley Church. The next in succession was Mr. Wm. Bibby, who ministered from 1706 to 1722, at which date he left. At this time the assembly was holden in the minister's dwelling-house. The Rev. J. Jennings, M.A., followed Mr. Bibby. He was a gentleman of learning, and kept an academy for the ministry. The meeting house was built in the year 1722 under his auspices. Mr. Jennings died of the small-pox July 8th, 1723. Under him was educated the celebrated Dr. Doddridge, who preached his first sermon at Hinckley, on the 22nd July, 1722. The next in succession was Mr. Robert Dawson, who came in 1725, and continued for more than twenty-five years. During his ministry, about the year 1727, the gallery was erected, and in 1740 the meeting-house underwent repair. Mr. Dawson died in the 65th year of his age, and was buried in the meeting yard. In 1755 came Mr. Nath. White, who married the sister of William Hurst, Esq., of the Grange, Hinckley. He continued until the death of King George II., 1760, when he removed to Leeds. He was succeeded by Mr. Thos. Porter, in 1765, who left in 1772. Mr. John Phillips came the same year, but in 1778 declined the profession for a more lucrative one—the law. Mr. Phillips

was succeeded by a Mr. Burket, who continued but a few years. He kept a boarding school for young ladies. Afterwards came Mr. William Severn, in 1783, and who removed to Norwich. The list of ministerial settlements from this date to the present is as follows:—Rev. Herbert Jenkins, of Kidderminster, 1808; Rev. Bull Bristowe, 1811; Rev. Christian Newton Saint, 1817; Rev. James Evans, 1821; Rev. Samuel Allard, 1825; Rev. Geo. Skey, 1831; Rev. C. C. Nutter, 1833; Rev. W. Mountford, of America, author of "Thorpe and Euthanasia," &c.; 1842; Rev. W. Johnson, 1843; Rev. James Cooper, 1845; Rev. M. Gascoigne, 1846; Silas Henn, 1847; Rev. G. Lunn, 1847; Rev. Mr. Mathiason, 1852; Rev. W. Newton, 1858; Rev. W. Mitchell, 1861; Rev. Henry Calloway, 1863; Rev. H. Webb Ellis, 1865.

We present our readers on the opposite page with an exterior view of the venerable meeting-house, from a recent photograph furnished to us by the Rev. H. Webb Ellis, the present minister. The congregation are now appealing for aid through the press towards an effort they are making for putting *new windows into the chapel* and the erection of a school-room. This appeal we recommend to the generous sympathy of our friends.

JEWISH PRAYER.

DIVINE UNITY.

My God! Thou hast blessed Thy people and elevated them from among the families of the earth, bestowing on them light and truth, so that they may become a blessing to the generations of the world.

The descendants of the patriarchs are the children of Thy choice, because their fathers were the first to proclaim the Unity of Thy name. When all the inhabitants of the world raised altars and temples to idols, our patriarchs called on the name of the Eternal, and transmitted to their children the knowledge and the worship of the true God. Whilst idolatrous nations have passed successively from the earth, engulfed in the abyss of time, Israel still exists to accomplish the sacred mission begun by his ancestors, that of spreading enlightenment and truth through the great idea of Thy Unity. Therefore, do we render thanks to Thee. O Lord, and raise our hearts, full of joy and love, towards Thy throne.

REUNION IN HEAVEN.

"Father Cardinal, I have heard your say,
That we shall see and know our friends in heaven."
Shakespeare.

THE close of another year draws nigh, and the festive season, which unites the scattered members of families, is upon us. After twelve months' toil, and care, and separation, how delightful to mingle around the old hearth stone and tell the tales of the losses and gains, the joys and sorrows of the past. Parents and children harvest into one sheaf a year's experience, and are made to feel it is well that a family is broken up and scattered, that they may come together more wise, manly, loving and useful to each other, than if they had always dwelt under one roof. But is there not a breach made every year in tens of thousands of families which cannot be healed by Christmas time? How many of us know that this is so? Can we hope from analogies in our past experience of family life, that this stern separation, by death, is only another stage of our preordained destiny by the Father of our spirits, and that we shall all meet again, and have our compensation for this temporary separation, around the throne of Eternal love? Yes, we believe we shall all meet again, as travellers who have parted in the morning and assembled again, at night, and have enriched the evening with the various adventures of the day. The journey and trials of the life of each one of us shall soon be over, and then,

"Arrived at last the blessed goal;
When he who died in Holy Land,
Shall reach us out his shining hand,
And lead us in—yes, every soul."

And shall we know each other, and shall we be reunited as a happy family around our Father's table of love? This we most firmly believe. We have a humble, loving trust this shall be so; that it is the will of our Father that not one of us shall perish; nor from our remembrance shall love and friendship be ever blotted out. Everywhere, thank God, when those painful bereavements have taken place, where death has snatched away the flowers of a beautiful affection, the hope has been left, some sign has been given, the vow of promise has appeared even out of the tears we have shed, englobed with light and beauty, and arched out a heavenly way. God, the all loving author

of man's life and man's hopes, has sent a gleam of sunshine, or a strain of music, reconciling him to his temporary sorrow, and saying: "He sows in tears to reap in joy."

Who has not experienced a closing year, and looked along its pathway and observed that time has carried away some friend? Where is the family circle that has not been invaded by death? This beautiful world would often be a dark place indeed, and its present friendships a cold dull thing if the absent were to be for ever absent, and the dead were dead for evermore. God has not left man in the darkness of hopelessness. We shall meet again and know each other, is a feeling co-extensive with our race. Our future we leave in the hands of God, who has filled all the present with goodness, and whose tenderness outstrips the love of human hearts, and who is sure to do what is best. Those desires and trusts, and those deep yearnings of the human soul, those affections which follow the departed with an eye of faith, are the heralds of our destiny and the prophets of our glory. The dust may mingle with its kindred element while the spirit passes on to the temple of higher life, where memory, reason, and affection shall ever live and rejoice. The change of the body, and the destruction of every particle of matter, lessens not our attachment to personal qualities which outlive the investing walls of the spirit. And shall we know each other disrobed of this integument of clay? Why not? Old friends, after years of separation, with every feature and lineament altered, still retain a link of recognition. And the blind, who know neither form nor colour, are equally attached, without a particle of visible matter, a ray of light on any human face. God who has joined us here by ties deeper than the skin—who forms our friendship out of affinities not cognisable by the senses, has given us proof abundant that there are within our nature special fitnesses and adaptations for future communion with himself, and fellowship with one another, independent of this mortal body. We shall live again, and we shall not be less wise or less apt to recognise one another in the spiritual world than we are in this.

In this hope of immortality and reunion in heaven we follow, or are led along by,

the force of universal nature; our instincts, our moral reason, our imagination, and our affections all travel in this direction. Strongly manifest and deeply embedded in the very essence of the nature of humanity is this hope—fixed there as a shining star to guide and comfort universal man. Reasons may be gathered up from history, authority, science, and moral law, but the surest and safest of all reasons is in the most simple and rational article of all religion, “faith in God.” “This is life eternal to know Thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou has sent.” As the sun of day adorns the landscape with beauty, so the teachings of Christ develop all the best feelings and aspirations of the human heart. Philosophy may say it is probable that the soul may retain after death its individuality as an identical force—its form of life and memory, its indestructible moral qualities. Christ says we shall: “I will receive *you* to myself, that where I am there ye shall be also.” He opens wide the door of the house of many mansions and says, one of those shall be yours. Shall we know each other? Christ says, he shall know us and we shall know him there; then can we doubt but we shall know and be known by our friends in heaven. We shall not be alone in the home above, and who so likely to be near us as those with whom we started the journey of life? If our destiny co-ordinates with our innocent, natural, most useful and loving desires, then we shall meet again, and shall help each other on through ages of progress and realms of love. If the present world so well harmonises with all our faculties and is the home of the body, so we can believe that the future world is not less wisely planned to be the fulfilment of our hopes and expectations. Here, amid the transient enjoyments of time, we feel through every season of trial and experience our heart growing more strong in these convictions that we shall follow those who have gone before and dwell with them for ever in the Paradise of God. We understand our aspirations of better and more permanent life as the hints of Providence, the foregleams of a destiny decreed by the Architect of the soul.

In this view of our future there are great moral considerations we may briefly glance over. The thought, that the soul

of the departed may be near us, steals over our whole frame with a sweetness and a power, at times, which evoke higher and better life. How cheering too is this thought, and to push it aside is to make life more mysterious and death more dreadful. In proportion as we cherish the hope that we shall meet again, where the things incidental to present life are no more,—social distinctions, poverty and wealth, the crowns of kings, the honours of birth, and the robes of state,—all these shall disappear, and we shall appear what we are, poor or rich in moral and spiritual qualities,—instantly then the feelings of equality, forbearance, and kindness spring up. This hope of perpetual life enables us the better to cling to the memories of the good, and to clothe us now with their saintly feelings. We shall meet again has strengthened the heart, amid the temptations of the world, to care for and bless the widow and fatherless—that the smile of a departed brother or sister and the welcome of a loved friend might greet us on the shores of eternity. For a moment we may hide our sins or our meanness from the eye of flesh, but the rocks cannot hide us nor the mountains cover us from the consciousness of our shortcomings, nor from the sight of a spiritual agent. We are rich or poor in the sight of God and the angels of heaven, not according to those adventitious things which surround us, but as we are inwardly and morally weak or strong. Lazarus becomes superior to Dives as wisdom is superior to gold. We must render a just account to our moral nature or it will be our tormentor, and we must render a just account to one another or we are not prepared to meet above.

We shall meet again, however conquered or perverse our course. Let us therefore contemplate the company we shall join and the purity and benevolence necessary for our peace. The brave, the wise, the virtuous, and noble are there, and it is well for us to hold up to our view the saintly qualities, worthy memories, pious feelings, and Christian examples they left behind. The hope of meeting those who have gone before helps to transform our tempers and lives into the fair patterns of celestial goodness with which we now delight to clothe them. And the time is drawing near when we may be so enlightened

and inspired with God's presence, and the means of improvement afforded us, our minds may be so enlarged and made sensitive to spiritual qualities and dispositions—that not only our friends whom we have known may be at once recognised by us, but all the leading characters of history may testify who they are. Their spiritual presence may at once speak to our hearts, and say, this is Moses, Paul, or Christ.

COMPENSATIONS.

In every joy there is a pain,
In every rose a thorn;
But still, the brightest rose we see
Beneath a cloud is born.

By rain and dew and smiles of day
The earth is made more bright,
And clearer are the twinkling stars
That gem the darkest night.

Then let me fold my heart in peace
And take the bitter cup,
Then shall I see the angel band,
And with the angels sup.

When wintry thoughts shall chill my heart,
Let this afford relief,
That He who warms the earth with snow
Can calm the soul with grief.

S. H. LLOYD.

THERE are gains for all our losses,
There are balms for all our pain,
But when youth—the dream—departs,
It takes something from our hearts,
And it never comes again.

We are stronger and are better
Under manhood's sterner reign;
Still we feel that something sweet
Followed youth with flying feet,
And will never come again.

Something beautiful is vanished,
And we sigh for it in vain;
We behold it everywhere—
On the earth and in the air,
But it never comes again.

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LET OUT THE PRISONERS.

A. C. THOMAS.

ON the night of the 23rd of October, 1828, the citizens were aroused from their slumbers by the ringing of bells and the cry of *fire!* It was soon ascertained that a building in the north yard of the prison, occupied as a paint-shop, and at the time filled with combustible materials, was in flames. Its contiguity to the north wing of the prison (in which the convicts were all confined in separate cells), and the fearful progress the flames had already made, seemed to justify the apprehension that the whole of the pile would be laid in ruins. Nearly six hundred prisoners were locked up in separate cells, within ten feet of the wall which at that moment was wrapped in flames.

As the cries and shrieks reached the multitude of citizens, there seemed to be but one desire and that desire was expressed in the imperative ejaculation, "*Let out the prisoners!* LET OUT THE PRISONERS!"

The prison-doors were opened, and every heart rejoiced in the liberation of the captives. And even some of the convicts, bad as they were, exposed their own lives in aiding their companions in misery.

Can there be any doubt as to the character of the spirit which cried, "*Let out the prisoners?*" Was it depravity of heart that uttered this demand? Was it not rather the spirit of him who "can have compassion on the ignorant, and on those who are out of the way?"

It is not supposed that the professors and pupils in the THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY close by were unmoved and silent spectators of the scene described. Doubtless they mingled with the citizens, and co-operated in all endeavours to stay the devouring element; and when these attempts became hopeless, I will venture to affirm that the voices of those pious divines were heard in the demand of humanity, *Let out the prisoners!*

Why should it be otherwise? They were men, having the feelings of men: they were Christians, and the spirit of Christ could not ask less than the liberation of the captives under such awful circumstances.

But how will it be with those pious divines, in the immortal world, if their creed be true? Surely they will retain the

same holy spirit there that they manifested in Auburn; and when they hear the shrieks and groans of millions of captives weltering in liquid fire, will they not rise in the sublime majesty of a humanity glorified, and cry, LET OUT THE PRISONERS!

An objector, however, may inquire, "Would you have all judgments cancelled, so that the sinner shall be wholly unpunished?"

Certainly not. The word of the Lord abides, that "he that doeth wrong, shall receive for the wrong he hath done: and there is no respect of persons." Col. iii. 25. But because we discard the notion of *endless* punishment, does it follow that we hold to *no punishment* whatever? Surely you can conceive of a position which avoids both these extremes. You can conceive of a punishment which, while it is *just* is also *merciful*; and wherever and whenever such punishment is administered, its infliction does not contravene the Christian spirit.

And herein is discovered the doctrinal bearing of the incident above narrated. God certainly has not affixed any such penalty to his law as must incur the disapprobation of every pious soul. Friends of darkness might exult in the infliction of endless torment: men, hardened to the last degree, or savages of the lowest grade, might possibly look on with indifference; but the angels and saints of God's presence would shudder at the awful spectacle, and instinctively demand the deliverance of the sufferers.

And is not this an unanswerable objection to the truth of the doctrine of endless torment?

It may perhaps be said that we shall have no such feelings of sympathy in the future life as we now possess, but that we shall be changed.

Alas! how changed! Even so we might be changed in the present life. But in such a change we should be divested of all Christian peculiarities.

Oh no, my friends. The change from mortal to immortal is a change for the better; and the rejoicing of the immortal life will have for its principal element the deliverance of the whole rational creation from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Romans viii. 18-21.

CLOSING THE YEAR.

SPEAK softly! let no word of idle feelings

Find entrance here;

With bowed and reverend faces watch we,
kneeling,

The dying year.

With solemn thought, in prayerful retrospec-
tion

Our spirits bow;

Thou see'st our hearts, O Lord, give right
direction,

Give wisdom now!

Help us review the past—we would not cover
Its sin or shame;

But in thy searching light would we discover
Its praise or blame.

Its praise, O heart of mine! for what well-
doing

Cometh such grace?

Where, for thyself, doth thy most careful
viewing

Find *this* a place?

How oft hast thou withheld the word of kind-
ness?

How failed in giving

The loving help that would have drawn from
blindness,

Into right living?

How oft forgotten that this earth's poor plea-
sures

Are false and vain,

And missed the meaning in thy search for
treasures

Of "loss and gain?"

O, trembling heart! thy record shows but poorly,
Blotted and dim;

No page of thine canst thou bring sweet and
purely,

To offer Him.

What wilt thou say, O heart, beneath his scan-
ning?

Thou canst not mean

By any work of thine, by thy poor planning,
To make these clean!

How wilt thou answer Him while thus he
turneth

This book of thine?

How wilt thou stand while his pure sight dis-
cerneth

Each page—each line?

"Withholding not one line, in all completeness,
Trusting his grace,

I lay these pages down beneath the sweetness
Of his dear face."

In Jesus resting, finding naught but sweetness,
We close this year;

Our grateful hearts rise glad in his complete-
ness,

Filled with sweet cheer.

Unto Him looking, thus will each to-morrow
Grow fair and clear;

And we shall greet with gladness, not with
sorrow,

The untried year.

WAYSIDE GATHERINGS.

CHANNING ALMOST A CHRISTIAN.—A primitive methodist preacher informed his people a few months ago he had been reading Channing's works, and he felt that Channing was *almost* a Christian.

A REMARKABLE CONCESSION OF LUTHER'S.—In a letter to Hansen von Rechenberg, dated 1552, he says, in effect, "Whoso hath faith in Christ shall be saved. God forbid that I should limit the time for acquiring this faith to the present life! In the depths of divine mercy there may be an opportunity to win it in the future state."

DEFENDERS OF THE FAITH.—Brewster says, "England may well be proud of having had Milton, Locke, and Newton for the champions, both of its faith and its Protestantism." And Lord Brougham said, "Englishmen should be careful not to persecute the Unitarians, who could justly regard these three men as holding views identical with their own."

WHERE ORTHODOXY BEGINS.—When the Rev. Dr. Alexander passed through New England in the beginning of this century, he called on Dr. Strong, of Hartford, who, before he had hardly shut the door, said to his guest, "Dr. Alexander, what is the origin of evil?" Dr. Alexander's reply was, "Is it necessary for us to begin there? or is that the first thing?"

NEVER GROW OLD.—Rev. Dr. Guthrie, the eloquent preacher of Scotland, thus moralises on his advancing years:—"They say I am growing old because my hair is silvered and there are crows' feet upon my forehead, and my step is not so firm and elastic as of yore. But they are mistaken. That is not me. The knees are weak, but the knees are not me. The brow is wrinkled, but the brow is not me. This is the house in which I live. But I am young—*younger* now than ever I was before."

PIETY AND COOKERY.—"I've nothing to say agin her piety, my dear; but I know very well I shouldn't like her to cook my victual. When a man comes in hungry an' tired, piety won't feed him, I reckon. Hard carrots will lie heavy on his stomach, piety or no piety. I called in one day when she was dishin' up Mr. Tryan's dinner, an' I could see the potatoes was as watery as water. It's right enough to be spiritual—I'm no enemy to that—but I like my potatoes mealy. I don't see as anybody'll go to heaven the sooner for not digestin' their dinner."—*Blackwood's Magazine.*

THE SPIRIT OF PERSECUTION.—In carrying out the new gasworks in the city of Albi, where so many of the Protestants called Albigenses suffered death, the contractors came upon a pit full of the bones of those ancient martyrs. It was resolved to have them conveyed to one of the churchyards and bury them there. The archbishop interposed, and said that the bones of heretics should not be buried in holy ground, but in an open field; and thus fulfilled the words of our Master, "If ye had been in the days of your fathers ye would have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets."

PERFECT HAPPINESS.—Perfect happiness on earth is as much unattainable as unbroken sunshine, and would be as wearisome and destructive.

A SERMON IN STONE.—The Princess Elizabeth, daughter of Charles I., lies buried in Newport Church, in the Isle of Wight. A marble monument, erected by our gracious Queen, records, in a touching way, the manner of her death. She languished in Carisbrooke Castle during the unhappy Commonwealth wars, a prisoner, alone, and separate from all the companions of her youth, until death set her free. She was found dead one day with her head leaning on her Bible, and the Bible open at the words, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The monument in Newport Church records this fact. It consists of a female figure reclining her head on a marble book, with the text already quoted engraven on it.

A DELIGHTFUL LEGEND.—There is a charming tradition connected with the site on which the Temple of Solomon was erected. It is said to have been owned in common by two brothers, one of whom had a family, the other had none. On the spot was sown a field of wheat. On the evening succeeding the harvest, the wheat having been gathered in separate shocks, the elder brother said unto his wife:—"My younger brother is unable to bear the heat and burden of the day; I will arise, take off my shocks and place them with his, without his knowledge." The younger brother, being actuated by the same benevolent motives, said within himself:—"My elder brother has a family, and I have none; I will contribute to their support; I will arise, take off my shocks, and place them with his without his knowledge." Judge of their mutual astonishment when, on the following morning, they found their shocks undiminished. This course of events transpired for several nights, when each resolved, in his mind, to stand guard and solve the mystery. They did so, when, on the following night, they met each other, half-way between their respective shocks, with arms full. Upon ground hallowed with such associations as these was the Temple of Solomon erected—so spacious and magnificent, the admiration and wonder of the world. Alas! in these days how many would sooner steal their brother's whole shock than add to it a single sheaf!

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